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THE BAY CITY TIMES

Child abuse case moving forward in Circuit Court

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

By **CRYSTAL McMORRIS**

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A 35-year-old Bay City man accused of abusing his son has given up his right to an evidence hearing and will face trial in Bay County Circuit Court if a plea agreement isn't reached.

Michael S. Harsha, 1407 Ninth St., remains lodged in the Bay County Jail in lieu of \$50,000 bond. Two other people charged with abusing the 7-year-old boy have demanded an evidence hearing, which began last week in Bay County District Court and will continue on Feb. 5.

Michael J. Pasquale, 32, Cassandra Pasquale, 30, and Harsha each face up to 15 years in prison if convicted of first-degree child abuse. Each defendant also has been charged with one count of second-degree child abuse.

The seven-year-old boy weighed

31 pounds and was covered with burns and bruises when police were called to Bay Regional Medical Center in September. Harsha had taken the boy in for treatment after one of the burns wouldn't heal. The boy first described a series of accidents to account for the wounds, but then told investigators at the Nathan Weidner Child Advocacy Center that Michael Pasquale burned him intentionally with a lighter.

The boy said his father began abusing him when the two lived on Dean Street and would send him to a cellar for punishment. After losing his home to foreclosure, Harsha and his son moved in with the Pasquales, where the boy said both kicked, beat and hit him, forced him to take cold showers and kept him in the closet, sometimes wearing a diaper.

The child completed kindergarten and first grade at the Bay County Public School Academy, but had not been enrolled in school this academic year.

When interviewed by police, the Pasquales and Harsha denied the abuse.

No trial date has yet been set for Harsha. The Pasquales' evidence hearing will continue at 1:30 p.m. Feb. 5 before Bay County District Judge Scott J. Newcombe.

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Published January 15, 2008

Opening statements made in Lansing child abuse trial

Midday update

Susan Vela
Lansing State Journal

Opening statements were made this morning in the trial of Robin Terence Wood, 60, facing six counts of criminal sexual conduct involving three children.

"This is a case about relationships and it's about exploitation and it's about sexual assault," Assistant Prosecutor Bill Crino said.

Wood, who is out of jail on bond, is accused of assaulting two children who attended his wife's day-care facility at their home in Lansing, according to court documents. He also is accused of molesting another child.

The day-care facility has since lost its license, officials said.

"He did not touch them from purposes of sexual arousal," said Wood's defense attorney, John Frawley. "There is no physical evidence whatsoever."

After opening statements, a 5-year-old girl, apparently one of his victims, took the stand.

Most people, including news media, were not allowed in the court room for the testimony.

Read more at LSJ.com and Wednesday's Lansing State Journal.

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Published January 15, 2008

Boy testifies in trial of 911 operators he called when his mom died

Midday update

Ben Schmitt
Detroit Free Press

Testimony began today in the trial of two Detroit 911 operators charged with willful neglect of duty after a 5-year-old boy called for help on the day his mother collapsed and died in 2006.

Robert Turner, now 7, testified today that when he called 911 the first time, the operator was mean to him. He called at 5:59 p.m. on Feb. 20, 2006, and told operator Sharon Nichols that his mother, Sherrill Turner, had died.

He said that when his mother fell, he put his hand on her chest. He said his mother was lying on the floor in her nightgown when he made his first of two calls to 911. When Wayne County prosecutor Lora Weingarden asked him how the operator treated him, the boy replied, "not good."

"She said 'Stop playing on the phone,' " Robert told Weingarden in 36th District Court.

Robert called back at 9:02 p.m. and spoke to another operator, Terri Sutton.

Transcripts from the 911 call indicate both operators scolded Robert, apparently suspecting he was playing with the phone. Sutton is heard telling the boy to put his mother on the phone "before I send the police out there to knock on the door and you going to be in trouble."

The boy can be heard sighing, and then he hangs up.

Also during testimony today, Robert had difficulty remembering his mother's name. He also said he did not know what time the incident took place because he did not know how to tell time then.

Police responded to the Turner home and found Robert in the house on the city's west side alone with his mother's body. Sherrill Turner's death was later attributed to an enlarged heart. The boy is now living with an aunt.

Nichols' attorney, Cornelius Pitts, questioned how Robert could remember details of the night nearly two years ago, but could not remember his mother's name.

He said the trial will expose flaws in the 911 system and that the city is making the dispatchers a scapegoat.

"This never should have been brought here at all," he said of the case.

Contact Ben Schmitt at (313) 223-4296 or at bcschmitt@freepress.com.

Michigan Report

January 14, 2008

COX ANNOUNCES CHILD PROTECTION DEAL WITH MYSPACE

The social networking Internet site MySpace has agreed to implement additional measures to protect children using its site under pressure from [Attorney General Mike Cox](#) and other state attorneys general.

Under the changes, [MySpace](#) will allow parents to submit their children's email addresses and the site will prohibit profiles from being created based on those addresses. The site will also develop systems to better verify the ages of users and make it more difficult for adults to contact children.

The age and identify verification systems will be developed by an Internet Safety Technical Task Force operated jointly between MySpace and the attorneys general.

MySpace will also dedicate more personnel to reviewing postings on its sites for inappropriate content and links to pornographic websites.

"Today's announcement is a major step in the right direction by MySpace to help protect children online," Mr. Cox said. "Too many youngsters still are preyed upon by Internet predators. These changes will help safeguard more children online."

Journalist to head state child's advocacy group

January 15, 2008

BY JOE SWICKARD

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Veteran journalist Jack Kresnak -- whose two decades of reporting on children's issues for the Free Press was honored by the state Supreme Court and national advocacy organizations -- will be the new president of Michigan's Children.

Kresnak, 56, who retired from the newspaper in December after a 38-year reporting career, will assume leadership of the nonprofit advocacy group Feb 4.

Advertisement

"We are thrilled to have Jack join us in our mission to improve the lives of all Michigan's children," said Terry Murphy, board chairman of Michigan's Children. "His commitment to children and passion for children's issues have been evident throughout his extensive and impressive journalism career."

Kresnak said he wants to build on outgoing President Sharon Claytor Peters' work as a strong voice "educating the public, the government and especially the state Legislature about what's really going on with child welfare issues."

He said he pushed his reporting to go beyond chronicling tragedies to "actively participate in finding solutions to the issues facing Michigan's children." He said he sees the new position as a further opportunity to help children.

In November, Kresnak became the first journalist honored by the Michigan Supreme Court. Justice Marilyn Kelly said his work with children and on juvenile justice issues not only informed the public "but helped the system critique and change itself."

Michigan's Children is a statewide independent advocate for the state's children and families.

Contact **JOE SWICKARD** at 313-222-8769 or jswickard@freepress.com.

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Six D.C. employees to be fired in slain kids case

- Story Highlights
- Six worked for child welfare agency; more firings could follow
- Mayor acknowledges failure by city agencies, promises reforms
- Family had contact with five city agencies; no one intervened
- Mayor plays tapes of frustrated school social worker's calls

WASHINGTON (AP) -- At least six child welfare workers will be fired for failing to properly address complaints about a woman's care of her four daughters, who were later found dead in their home, the mayor said Monday.

The decomposing bodies of the girls -- ages 5 to 16 -- were found Wednesday when deputy U.S. marshals served an eviction notice at the row house. Their mother has been charged with murder.

A social worker at the school where the oldest girl was a student tried twice in April to get city agencies to investigate.

At a news conference Monday, Mayor Adrian M. Fenty played tapes of two calls the social worker, Kathy Lopes, made after the girl, Brittany Jacks, stopped going to school in March. [Watch how the social worker tried to help »](#)

Lopes called the city's child welfare hot line and said she had visited the home, but she was not let in by the mother, Banita Jacks. Lopes said Jacks told her she did not want Brittany going to school because she was afraid the girl would run away. Lopes reported seeing two or three younger children who also were not in school.

In a second call -- this time to police -- Lopes expressed frustration at being transferred among several city departments and said she was concerned about Banita Jacks' mental state.

"It seems that the mother is suffering from some mental illness in which she is holding all the children in the home hostage," Lopes said.

Jacks later told investigators the children were possessed by demons and died in their sleep.

The six employees being fired work for the District of Columbia's Child and Family Services Agency, and include a division director. More workers could lose their jobs as an investigation continues, [Fenty](#) said. [Watch how the children slipped through the cracks »](#)

Sharlynn Bobo, the agency director, said workers were "grieving just like the rest of the community."

"We deeply regret -- I deeply regret -- our failures in responding effectively and rapidly to this family," Bobo said.

Fenty praised Lopes, who works at the Booker T. Washington Public Charter School.

"Unfortunately, she stands out really because so many other people didn't do their job in the way they're supposed to," Fenty said.

The mayor said there was never any follow-up on the three younger girls, who had attended the Meridian Public Charter School.

Lopes' call was not the first time someone had tried to alert the city about the family's situation.

In July 2006, a nurse who had been treating the father of Jacks' youngest two daughters called the child welfare hot line to report the family was living in a van and that the parents were struggling with substance abuse, officials said. The nurse couldn't provide an address for the family so social workers did not follow up.

City officials also outlined several policy changes to prevent a similar tragedy, including establishing a system that better tracks students who are withdrawn from school to be taught at home. Cases involving child abuse or neglect allegations will not be closed until the child is found and determined to be safe.

An investigation into Jacks' family was closed weeks after Lopes' visit because child welfare officials thought the family had moved to Maryland - even though the family was not located.

Authorities have said the girls died at least 15 days before they were found. Jacks' statement to police indicated they had been dead for months. The medical examiner's office has said there is evidence that Brittany was stabbed and that Tatianna Jacks, 11; N'Kiah Fogle, 6; and Aja Fogle, 5, had other signs of trauma.

Court documents initially identified Brittany Jacks as being 17 years old; however, her 17th birthday would have been January 5.

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=Six+D.C.+employees+to+be+fired+in+slai...> 1/15/2008



Slain wife warned friends about possible violence

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

By John Agar and John Tunison

The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- The end for Lori DeKleine came just as she feared.

Days before her estranged police-officer husband, Ken DeKleine, allegedly slipped into her Holland Heights home and strangled her, she told friends: "You know, if I come up dead, if something happens to me, make sure Ken's investigated."

Her attorney, Holly Verde, recalled the haunting words Monday. She thinks Holland police should have done more to protect her client after Lori DeKleine chronicled allegations of abuse and a break-in at the home the couple once shared on Calvin Avenue.

In a statement she wrote nearly a year ago, Lori DeKleine said: "I have become increasingly terrified and afraid for my life."

Verde said she shuddered when she heard her client apparently killed herself Thursday. She called prosecutors. Ken DeKleine was arrested the next day and was arraigned Monday on a charge of open murder.

As the couple's marriage crumbled, police twice investigated allegations he violated a restraining order, but prosecutors did not find evidence to charge him. Police investigated the break-in, but it was viewed as a civil dispute because the officer, at the time, was not barred from the home.

"If there would have been alarm signs, we would have done something," Chief John Kruithoff said. "I didn't see there was a significant event that went on in his life that would have triggered this. Ken was a very talkative person, everyone's friend. He didn't suppress the fact he was having marital troubles. But, obviously, he suppressed something enough where he committed this."

Verde said Lori DeKleine felt isolated, and she did not think the police would protect her. She believed her husband had convinced friends, including those at Holland Heights Christian Reformed Church, where they both worshipped and she worked, that she was the problem.

A mutual friend told her that Ken DeKleine had falsely told others she had a relationship with her therapist, records showed. DeKleine also said his estranged wife suffered severe depression and was suicidal. She has a "well-established pattern of blaming others for her mental and emotional problems," he wrote in court documents.

Private troubles

The couples' private lives -- including Lori DeKleine's written allegations that her husband was a "sexual and emotional bully to me throughout our marriage, beginning on our honeymoon" -- contrasted sharply with their public image.

Retired Holland Police Officer Darryl Raterink wasn't the only one to find the homicide allegation unbelievable. "I just can't see that with Kenny. I can't imagine what it would take to make Kenny snap."

DeKleine led church trips, coached his son's lacrosse team and changed his work schedule to travel with his daughter's drama team. His wife once taught elementary school and published the church newsletter.

Their children, Breanne, 18, and Christopher, 16, excel at Holland Christian High School.

But court documents show the reality behind those idyllic appearances.

In a letter written to her father after he filed for divorce in late 2006, Breanne said her father's filing "shattered my world and my heart. ... You would not cry in front of the family, for this family, that you created, invested in, laughed with, got angry at, and loved deeply for the past 20 years. Sitting at that table was like a business meeting. You were the CEO, telling your board of directors that the company has just gone under. You were just that cold."

Her mother "put up with more than she should have, and more than most people would have," she wrote. "We've, I've, put up with your bull ... for a long time, but this goes too far."

Still, she said: "I love you, Daddy, with all my heart, and that will never go away. I am, however, more pissed off than I have ever been. ..."

Mental health accusations

Almost a year ago, Lori DeKleine, 43, obtained a personal-protection order, with a judge's provision that allowed her husband to carry a gun on the job.

Ken DeKleine, 44, who initially contested the order, said his wife's "severe depression" and suicide attempts left her too unstable to care for the children.

He was particularly concerned in 2005, while training Iraqi police officers overseas. In an e-mail, she said their son had asked if she was OK.

"This is a very poignant reminder to me that both Breanne and Christopher are very aware of Lori's several suicide attempts (once by overdose) and of her struggle with severe depression when she is under stress. ... Most people have become wise to her manipulation, but the children have grown up with this and do not recognize it for what it is," Ken DeKleine wrote.

He said he had "complete support" from police commanders who had "full knowledge of all of Lori's mental health issues and have discussed her suicidal behavior ...," he wrote.

Some say Iraq changed him. The week after he returned, he "walked out in a rage of anger," his wife wrote. But the chief said the officer was affected by marital troubles, not Iraq. DeKleine trained police for a private contractor -- not Blackwater, as some have alleged -- and returned in early 2006.

Break-in left blood, papers

Beyond filings in the protection order and divorce case, Lori DeKleine called police in early 2007 over a break-in at her home. Someone broke into her locked bedroom downstairs. She found blood, and papers had been copied. Ken DeKleine acknowledged to police he broke in, but it happened before the restraining order had been filed, and he had a legal right to be there.

The couple had a Feb. 7 bench trial scheduled. She looked forward to ending the marriage, but was anxious, too, because of her husband's anger toward her, her attorney said.

Hours before his wife was found dead Thursday evening, a friend saw Ken DeKleine at the Meijer Inc. store on East 16th Street. DeKleine did not seem agitated or out of sorts. They chatted about work, and DeKleine's time in Iraq.

"He was smiling, laughing, and you'd never know anything was wrong," said the friend, who didn't want to be identified. DeKleine was not wearing his wedding band. The friend didn't ask. Saturday morning, he got the news.

"It blew my mind."

-- Press staff writer Nate Reens contributed to this story.

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Group eyes Ferndale for free clinic

Group eyes Ferndale for free clinic Citizens for Fair Ferndale hosts forum Jan. 27.

By Michael P. McConnell
Daily Tribune Staff Writer

FERNDALE - A citizens group wants to bring a free medical clinic to Ferndale where people who lack money or medical insurance can get treatment.

Statewide there are about 47 such non-profit medical clinics of varying sizes.

The attempt to open a free clinic in Ferndale has been discussed among community activists for several years.

Now a group called Citizens for a Fair Ferndale, which is committed to fairness and diversity in the community, is hosting a forum for interested residents later this month.

"I think it is very feasible we can open a free non-profit clinic in Ferndale," said Ann Heler, a member of the citizens group. "I think it would take about a year to get it in place."

Kat Bruner, another member of the group, said the clinic would not use or seek any city funds to run a clinic if one can be established.

"But I think support from City Council members on the issue would be helpful," Bruner said.

Mayor Craig Covey said the effort to bring a free clinic to Ferndale is worthwhile and he supports it.

"I think we can be helpful and help move things toward achieving this goal," Covey said. "This is just one more example of cities working on a goal that the state and federal governments should be working on but are not."

The forum is set for 2-4 p.m. Jan. 27 at A J's Cafe, 240 W. Nine Mile Road.

Charissa Shawcross, who directs the free Joy-Southfield Health Clinic in Detroit, will be on hand to discuss the process of establishing and running a free medical clinic.

Shawcross, a nurse practitioner, said such clinics typically serve adults with preventive and primary health care.

Volunteers at the free clinics can often tell which sectors of the economy are hurting most by the people who show up for treatment.

"Right now we are seeing a lot of realtors because the real estate market is so bad," she said. "They can't afford their health care premiums and are starting

to cancel their health insurance."

Free clinics are staffed with volunteer doctors, nurses and other health care professionals and usually are open a few days a week.

"In our country there are 47 million people without health care coverage and the number is increasing," said Shawcross, whose clinic handles about 2,400 patients each month. "

The most common health problem among those patients is high blood pressure which left untreated leads to heart and kidney disease.

"When that happens they are not able to work and you lose that person's productivity and being able to benefit the community," Shawcross said.

Many times those without medical coverage only go to an emergency room when symptoms become acute.

"They may get a prescription but they don't get the (follow-up) management of their health problem," she said.

Other common problems range from asthma to diabetes, chronic conditions that require ongoing monitoring and treatment with a physician.

"But (free clinics) can't make a huge impact because there are so many uninsured people," Shawcross said.

Free clinics are chiefly funded by foundation grants, donations and some money from the state, she added.

Shawcross, a former resident of Pleasant Ridge and Royal Oak, now lives in Livonia and previously worked as an intensive care nurse for 10 years.

"I saw back then that we were providing so much health care so late because there were so many people who weren't getting any help," she said. "Having one free clinic in Ferndale isn't going to solve the problem. It is a stop-gap measure and we aren't going to solve the problem until we get a fair and just system where everybody has access to quality health care."

Click here to return to story:

http://www.dailytribune.com/stories/011508/loc_clinic.shtml

Detroit Free Press

Letters

January 15, 2008

Restore food stamp amount

Part of this budget surplus was obtained on the backs of the unemployed in the state. The Michigan Department of Human Resources cut the individual food stamps amount on April 1 from \$158 per individual per month to \$140.

I wonder, now that Michigan has a surplus, if this food stamp monthly amount can be restored?

Neil Karl

Livonia